DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 207 070 CS 206 584

AUTHOR LaRocque, Geraldine E.
TITLE If Self-Evaluation Is the Answer, What Is the Question?
PUB DATE Apr 81
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Secondary School English Conference (9th, Nashville, TN, April 2-4, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; Elementary Secondary Education; *English Instruction; *Evaluation Criteria; Evaluation Methods; *Models; *Self Evaluation (Individuals); *Teacher Effectiveness; *Teacher Evaluation; Teacher Improvement

ABSTRACT

A model for analyzing the interactions of the teaching act is essential for raising teachers' consciousness about the multitude of factors that constitute teaching. A paradigm for analyzing the teaching act can be stated as follows: the activities of a given subject matter, when taught by teachers with a particular background and qualities, will produce specific patterns of affective and cognitive learning in students with a particular background, maturity, and experience. Any change in one of the variables of the paradigm changes the results of cognitive and affective learning. In the same fashion, if the students' level of development changes, the teacher will have to make adjustments, perhaps in methodology and in content, in order to keep the level of cognitive and affective response high. One such change affecting the paradigm might be a lower student reading ability. Such heightened awareness by teachers of the factors that are important to success in teaching may make it possible for them to see that, for certain kinds of students who have difficulty in English, it may be the subject matter rather than the methodology that is contributing to the students' low achievement in language lessons. (HOD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED207070

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Geraldine E. LaRocque

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

X Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

If Self-Evaluation Is The Answer, What Is The Question?*

by

Geraldine E. LaRocque
Professor of English and Director of Teacher Education
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614

In his book No Easy Victories John Gardner says, "Much education today is monumentally ineffective. All too often we are giving young people cut flowers when we should be teaching them to grow their own plants. We are stuffing their heads with the products of earlier innovation rather than teaching them how to innovate. We think of the mind as a storehouse to be filled rather than as an instrument to be used."[1]

If we are to help our students see language as a tool and not as an exotic cut flower that will too-soon die, we will need to evaluate our lessons--analyze our teaching--as we have never done before; we will need to evaluate ourselves in order to answer the basic, all-important question, "What made this particular language lesson so successful?" or "Why did this plan fail in the fifth period class and succeed in the eighth?" "Was this a storehouse lesson or a process-oriented-instrument lesson?" In other words, if self-evaluation is the answer, the question is, "What made this particular lesson successful?"

I still believe, as I wrote several years ago, that:

> We have not often in the past been able to decide what in our lessons caused favorable or unfavorable results for two reasons: first, the interactions of the teaching act are extremely

---

[1] John W. Gardner, No Easy Victories (New York: Harper Colophon Books), 1968, p. 68.

*Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Secondary School English Conference, Nashville, Tennessee, April 2-4, 1981.

CS206584

complicated; and, second, those intricate interactions have not been codified for easy use. As a result, we judge the teaching act by outward appearances, by intuition, or by some inconsequential classroom accident. It is apparent that with the trend toward accountability--with administration trying to improve and judge the teaching skills of school staff and with supervisors trying to aid novice and student teachers to sharpen their teaching techniques--such codification is necessary.

A model for analyzing the interactions of the teaching act is essential for raising teachers' consciousness about the multitude of factors which constitute teaching. Once one has a model or paradigm of the basics of teaching, then one can take the successful lesson, dissect it, and determine what made it successful, thereby making it possible to create future lessons that have a greater possibility of achieving stated goals.[2]

Paradigm for Analyzing the Teaching Act

1 Subject matter of this nature, in this amount,* for these purposes,

2 with motivational activities and methodologies of these types,

3 in this situation or setting, and

4 with a teacher with this disposition, this background, and these qualities and attitudes

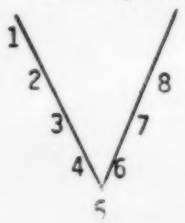
5 produces these patterns of affective and cognitive learning

6 in students at this level of aptitude, development and maturity,

7 with this kind of experience** and

8 with this kind of background.***

Diagram of the Paradigm



*Includes both content and time allotted for study
**Includes both reading experience and life experience
***Includes physical and psychological health, socio-economic, and cultural background

The following illustration of a language lesson and of its analysis is one of the answers to at least two questions:

(1) How can I examine my teaching in order to decide what has made it a success, a partial success, or an outright failure?

(2) How can I teach about language, a subject which often is neglected because teachers do not know how to develop language lessons?

---

[2]Geraldine E. LaRocque, "Paradigm with Panache, or Why Was I So Good in Class Today?" ERIC #ED170-786.

Although the paradigm can be used to analyze any lesson, no matter what the content, in this example let us concentrate on teaching the concept of the power of language in a fashion that will make the concept, in John Gardner's words, an instrument of use for the student.

Subject matter of this nature	Four translations of Cyrano de Bergerac.
Subject matter in this amount	One short speech from the balcony scene. (Which, for purposes of this article, will be cut even more to just the first few lines.)
For this purpose	To have students begin to understand the power of connotation, extended meanings, precise words, figurative language, and sound.
Motivation	Ask students if they would rather be called "crafty," "clever," or "sly." Why? Would you rather have a friend say, "You are funny" or "You are a fool." Why? Would you refer to agent 007 as a "sham"? Why or why not?
Methodology	Inductive comparison in class (as a group) of specific words, phrases, and ideas in the four translations. A short example follows:

Helen Dole translation

ROXANE (in an agitated voice). Yes, this is really love...

CYRANO. Surely, this feeling which pervades me, so terrible and jealous, is truly love; it has all the melancholy madness of love--and yet it is not selfish!

Howard Thayer Kingsbury translation

ROXANE: Yes, this indeed is love--

CYRANO: Truly, this passion
Jealous and terrible, which sweeps me on,
Is love indeed, with all its mournful madness!
Is love indeed, and yet it is not selfish!

Brian Hooker translation

ROXANE: (very low)

Yes....that is....Love-

CYRANO:
Yes, that is Love-that wind
Of terrible and jealous beauty, blowing
Over me-that dark fire, that music...
Yet
Love seeketh not his own!

Anthony Burgess translation

ROXANA: (shaken): Yes-this is-love.

CYRANO: Love,

Love, the parasitic heavenly host,
A terrible jealous god has seized me with most
Wretched fury-and yet he seizes not to possess,
He is only mad to give.

After telling the students the context of these speeches, the teacher begins the discussion of these passages by asking students the difference between "agitated," "very low," and "shaken." The connotations of the words picture Roxane in a different way. To be "shaken" by emotion suggests depth of feeling while "agitated" suggests irregular, violent motion not particularly well suited to a love scene.

After discussing stage directions, the class goes on to the differences between calling love a "feeling," a "passion jealous and terrible," a "wind of terrible and jealous beauty," and a "parasitic heavenly host." "Feeling" is a generic word; "passion" is somewhat more specific and precise; but the metaphoric language, "wind of terrible and jealous beauty," portrays love as beautiful, not as simply jealous and terrible. This particular metaphoric language is not only more powerful in what it evokes in the reader, but it is also truer to the romance of the first three translations in which love is beautiful, not jealous and terrible. The same is true of "dark fire...music."

Anthony Burgess's "parasitic heavenly host" is also a powerful metaphor, but the tone it conveys is not romantic but ambivalent; it hints at the joy of love being tempered by the loved one's sucking out life from the partner; it also pictures love as a "terrible and jealous god"; what does this use of "god" add to Burgess's translation that is not in the others?

What a wealth of language material to discuss in these few lines! One can continue with the connotation of the word "madness"; the sacred, holy quality of Cyrano's love as suggested by the Biblical "Love seeketh not his own"; and the difference between saying love "is not selfish" and the god of love "is only mad to give." And all of this can be done inductively with students discovering the differences in and the power of language through comparison and discussion.

In this situation or setting	The school encourages teachers to be creative and individually responsible for classes; the setting is pleasant with space for displaying language articles, with an overhead and tape recorder on hand for immediate use; and the class is the 3rd period of the day, not the first, last, or near the lunch hour.
With a teacher with this disposition, this background and these qualities and attitudes	The teacher is intelligent, healthy, and fascinated by language; he/she likes students and wants them to become sensitive to language nuances, is flexible, interested in students' opinions and reactions, and knows how to individualize instruction.
Produces a high level of cognitive and affective response in 90% of the students	After the teaching is completed, students can take four translations of a different speech in Cyrano, say, the nose speech, and state the differences in use of connotation, precise words, sound, extended meanings, and figurative language. They also express a liking for the methods used to teach the material. Values, feelings, and attitudes are generally positive.
In students at this level of development and maturity	These tenth graders are of average but heterogeneous intelligence; they are not mature for their age and they read between the 6th and 14th grade levels.
With this kind of experience and interests	They like to read and have read a fair amount of adolescent literature and some popular adult novels; they prefer adventure and romance; but some are beginning to read serious adult literature, newspaper, and news magazines. They have traveled in the U.S., but not extensively, and have had small-city types of experiences. They are interested in sports and camping.

With this kind of background	The class is predominantly middle class, with professional, blue collar, and white collar parents. Few students have attended plays in big cities; few have attended museums and art galleries; few come from homes where the New York Times, New Yorker, etc. are read. Physical health of students is generally good with a number going through life crises. Students are great movie-goers and record buyers.

Although each of the items of the paradigm could be more fully developed than has been done, the foregoing example gives an idea of how the paradigm can be filled in. It is my contention that if you change any of the above items in the paradigm, you will change line 5--"produces these patterns of affective and cognitive learning." In other words, any change in the paradigm, changes the results of cognitive and affective learning. For example, if you change the first line's "subject" from four translations of one speech in Cyrano to four different translations of a section of "Job" from the Bible, I believe you will change the kind of affective and cognitive response you will get from the students who are characterized in the last three lines of the paradigm. If you ask these kinds of students to read and understand "Job," you will probably get lower cognitive and affective patterns of response because of the difficulty of the text. If you change "in this amount" to four translations of one complete scene in Cyrano, you also will probably get a lower cognitive and affective patterns of response, line 5.

In the same fashion, if the students' level of development changes, the teacher will have to make adjustments, perhaps in methodology, in content, and in amount, in order to keep the level of cognitive and affective response high. One such change might be a lower student reading ability. In this case, the change might be to limit the content to only two of the most

different translations of Cyrano or to two versions of a simple poem, e.g., use Emily Dickinson's poem "Pedigree"

Pedigree

The pedigree of honey
does not concern the bee
A clover, any time, to him
Is aristocracy.

You alter the poem to furnish the second example

Quality

The quality of honey
Does not affect the bee;
A flower, any time, to him
Is high society.

For students who do not read well you might change the methodology as well as the content. The teacher might read to the class the complete version of one translation (Hooker, perhaps) from the overhead and then put on the overhead for comparison only one item at a time in its four versions. The speech would be presented slowly item by item, without the distraction of the whole speech in front of the students all the time.

On the other hand, if the students in the class are college-bound; have wide reading backgrounds in adolescent literature, with some background in popular and serious adult literature; are bright and highly motivated, with travel experience in all parts of the U.S. and some out-of-country travel; and are members of families who enjoy theater, opera, etc., then it is possible that the category "motivation" might include asking students, "Why might a government call the beatings and killings of people 'regrettable counter measures' instead of 'acts of terror'?" One could use a cartoon from Doonsbury (March 26, 1981) that asks this very question. Above-average students might also attack different subject matter; they might look at various translations

of "Job" from the King James version, the Revised Standard, the Phillips Modern English, and the New English Bible.

Another example of how a change in one part of the paradigm will change the results of line 5--student learning--will be obvious to experienced teachers. The weeks just before or during the state basketball finals when your school is a contender might not be favorable time to teach the subtleties of language--the situation may not be conducive to this kind of study. It is also possible that the teacher herself/himself may be exhausted just before spring vacation and not at her/his best either. On the other hand, just before Christmas, with certain kinds of students, in certain settings, one might consider looking at several translations of the Christmas story as presented in the gospel of St. Luke in the Bible.

Teachers (line 4) who feel insecure in teaching language lessons because of inadequate background may need to change some aspects of the paradigm which we have set up; they may want to exchange classes with a colleague who does this kind of thing well, use introductory language films, or invite a guest or gifted student to handle the lesson after coaching from the teacher and extra study.

Heightened awareness by teachers of what factors are important to success in teaching may make it possible for them to see that for certain kinds of tenth-grade students (lines 6-8) who have difficulty in English, it may be the subject matter--using the Oxford English Dictionary--rather than the methodology--groups--that is contributing to the class's low achievement in the language lessons. Motivation based on "you will fail the test" may also be at fault.

No matter what the problem, the model aids us in pinpointing the difficulty. If we have a behavioral objective which students can't meet--

line 5--but which we think is achievable by the students defined in lines 6-8, then it is possible that some aspects of lines 1-3 are unsuitable for the kinds of students described in lines 6-8; we also need to ascertain how line 4--the kind of person we as teachers are--is interacting with the items in lines 1-3 and 6-8.

Teaching is so complex that we cannot depend on panaceas, e.g., team teaching, elective courses, using the inductive method, etc Because of the complexity of teaching, one has to look, not to cure-alls, but to the interactions between and among the many factors. This, the paradigm enables us to do. It may, in fact, lead the way to a more effective method of assessing teachers and teaching; and it certainly will prevent instructors from continuing to repeat the same mistakes, from falling into teaching as an unexamined habit, a blemish that will grow more prominent with age.[3]

---

[3]Adapted from La Rochefoucauld: "Intellectual blemishes, like facial ones, grow more prominent with age."